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Marcos Sends Teams to Prey On U.S. Critics

Three years ago, I broke the chilling story that foreign dictators are sending their secret police to the United States to intimidate and silence critics. Some have been silenced permanently.

U.S. authorities not only are aware of these terrorist activities but, for diplomatic reasons, have failed to stop them.

One of the worst offenders is the Philippines' congenial dictator, Ferdinand Marcos, who will be wined and dined at the White House later this week. The cause of humanity would be better served if President Reagan, instead of raising his glass to toast Marcos, would raise some questions instead.

The ugly questions can be found in secret intelligence reports which are available to the president. One top-secret report charges that for the past decade the Filipino leader has sent "action teams" to the United States "for the purpose of infiltrating, monitoring and possibly counteracting the threat of anti-Marcos groups." The report warns of "the possibility of violence."

In fact, violence has already struck the Filipino immigrants who

work in Alaska's canneries. Most of them belong to Local 37 of the Alaska Cannery Workers Union. Their leaders have been staunchly pro-Marcos, with close ties to the Filipino consulate in Seattle.

But two anti-Marcos reformers, Gene Viernes and Silme Domingo, challenged the leadership and won top positions in their union in late 1980. The following April, Viernes visited the Philippines for the first time and spoke out against Marcos.

Then, late in the afternoon of June 1, 1981, the two 29-year-old reformers were at work in the local's Seattle office when two gunmen struck. Viernes died instantly.

Domingo, with four .45-cal. slugs in his body, chased the two assailants, pointed them out to a bystander and managed to give their names to a medic before passing out. He died the next day.

The two assassins were later convicted. The prosecution argued that the two hitmen were members of a gang involved in high-stakes gambling in Alaska, whose activities were threatened by the union reformers. The gang leader, Tony Dictado, was convicted of ordering the murders.

But a "committee for justice," led by Seattle attorney Mike Withey, was not satisfied. It suspected that the double murder may have been ordered by authorities in Manila, for these reasons:

- The convicted gangleader took

the witness stand. He swore he did not order the murders, which, he insisted had nothing to do with gambling. He knew the truth but could not reveal it, he testified, "because my children would be killed in the Philippines."

- The head of Local 37, Tony Baruso, owned the murder weapon and was honored by the Philippine government five months after the killings. He pleaded the Fifth 109 times during the gunmen's trial, another 31 times during gangleader Dictado's trial. During the second trial, the defense attorney accused him of ordering the murders.

- The slain reformers were in contact with dissidents in the Philippines, including two labor leaders who were arrested last month by Marcos and accused of subversion.

My associate Dale Van Atta questioned the Philippines Embassy about the murders. A spokesman said President Marcos had ordered an investigation, which was conducted by the labor attache in the San Francisco consulate.

The Philippine government's view is that the murders were strictly a local matter "involving union rivalries." Suggestions of any connection to the Marcos regime were drummed up by "critics on the West Coast just to embarrass the Philippines government," the spokesman said. "We are amazed that the Philippines government should be dragged into this."